



**U.S. Department of Justice**

**Brett L. Tolman**

**United States Attorney  
District of Utah**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**CONTACT: MELODIE RYDALCH  
801-325-3206  
801-243-6475 (CELL)**

**NEWS RELEASE  
*DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,  
U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, FBI  
READY TO PROTECT VOTING RIGHTS***

***AGENCIES WILL INVESTIGATE AND  
PROSECUTE VIOLATIONS  
OF ELECTION LAWS***

SALT LAKE CITY -- As Utah voters go to the polls Tuesday to cast ballots in this year's general elections, the U.S. Attorney's Office and the FBI in Utah are ready to handle any complaints of election fraud and voting rights abuses in consultation with the Department of Justice.

"Election fraud and voting rights abuses dilute the worth of votes honestly cast. They also corrupt the essence of our representative form of government. These are crimes that will be dealt with aggressively in Utah," U.S. Attorney Brett L. Tolman said. "Although Utah has a long history of holding problem-free elections, it is important for us to remind residents of our state where they can report complaints of election fraud and voting rights abuses in connection with this election," Tolman said.

Tolman is encouraging anyone who believes his or her right to vote has been subverted through intimidation, suppression, coercion or fraud to contact appropriate authorities.

Timothy Fuhrman, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI in Salt Lake City, said today that “the FBI takes seriously any allegation regarding either voter fraud or voter suppression. When such allegations are brought to our attention, they will be promptly reported to the U.S. Attorney’s Office and we will coordinate an appropriate investigative response with them.”

Tolman has appointed Assistant U.S. Attorney Stanley H. Olsen to lead his office's efforts in connection with the Justice Department's nationwide Election Day Program for the upcoming general elections. As the District Election Officer for Utah, Mr. Olsen is responsible for overseeing Utah's handling of complaints of election fraud and voting rights abuses in consultation with the Justice Department.

On October 8, 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft established a Department-wide Ballot Access and Voting Integrity Initiative. The goals of this initiative are to increase the Department's ability to deter election fraud and discrimination at the polls and to prosecute those offenses whenever and wherever they occur. The initiative seeks to make voting easier and cheating harder. The program also is intended to ensure public confidence in the integrity of the election process by providing local points of contact within the Department where the public can report possible election fraud and voting rights violations while the polls are open on Election Day.

Any Utah voter who has a complaint of election fraud or voting rights abuses can contact Assistant U.S. Attorney Olsen at 801-325-3336 or 801-325-3206 while the polls are open Tuesday.

The FBI also will have special agents available to receive allegations of election fraud and other election issues. The Salt Lake City FBI Office can be reached at 801-579-1400.

Complaints about ballot access problems or discrimination also can be made directly to the Civil Rights Division's Voting Section at the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., at 1-800-253-3931 or 202-307-2767.

The administration of the election process is primarily a state rather than a federal function. States have the power to establish the place, time, and manner for holding elections. The Department of Justice plays a limited but important role with respect to elections. The Justice Department's Criminal and Civil Rights Divisions enforce specific federal laws that help to ensure that all qualified voters have an opportunity to cast their ballots and have them counted.

According to Tolman, federal criminal prosecutions involving election laws generally are limited to intentional corruption of the process by which voters are registered and by which ballots are cast, results tabulated, and elections certified. For example, federal laws prohibit such things as intimidating or bribing people to register to vote or to participate in elections; malfeasance by election officials; qualifying fictitious individuals to vote; falsely claiming U.S. citizenship; and coercing the votes of the poor, the elderly, and the illiterate. Federal law also prevents people from denying the rights of minority voters and protects the rights of voters to mark their own ballot in private or to be assisted by a person of their choice.

Mistakes by election administrators, violations of state laws governing how elections are to be conducted, the accuracy of campaign literature, campaigning too close to the polls, the process by which candidates qualify for ballot status and events that occur in the course of political campaigns generally are not appropriate for federal prosecution, although such matters may violate state election laws. Voters with questions about these matters should contact their county clerk. Clerks' offices also are the best place to call with questions about where to vote.

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